



# Phoenix

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## Gutting the FAT one?

As a commercial station, KFAT is a phenomenon. It has garnered a rabid array of fans who will testify to the station's lack of commercial hype and Top-40 saccharine assault. Where else on the dial, point out the fans, can you find Loretta Lynn paired with the Louvin Brothers? The Fat formula of Irish tunes, old-timey ballads, vintage jazz and of course country and western at one time attracted the eye of prospective investor Emmylou Harris, who seriously considered buying a large share of the station.

This November 6, four long-standing and widely popular programmers were kicked off the air, for the sake of protecting a three million dollar assessment. The four—Sullivan, Terrell Lynn, Susan and Uncle Sherman, were, according to Sullivan, fired by the new program director, who had been on the job since the first of the month. The PD—Doug Droce—a professor at San Jose State—was hired to “tighten the format” and cure longtime money ills. The four, some of whom had been at KFAT for at least four years, were replaced with jocks from San Jose's KOMA and KFJC. Station listeners have turned to 94.5 to find Patsy Cline and Mickey Gilley replaced with syrupy string-backed Glen Campbell and jocks who hazard guesses like “The Chieftains—aren't they Irish?” Remarkd a former Fatty, “San Jose is creeping in. The station isn't coming across real.”

### A Brief Background

As a financial venture, KFAT has not been an unqualified



Shadow of commercialism over KFAT.

success. Since the 1930s, investing in commercial broadcasting has often proven to be goldmine. Despite the advent of television, radio continues to be big business, with a phalanx of advertisers competing for dollars-a-second airtime slots and capital worth increasing steadily with every purchase of expensive equipment. In the Monterey Bay area, glutted with non-unionized stations, personnel costs are

minimal—fulltime disc jockeys routinely make no more than \$3.50 an hour. Low employee costs and the nearby Santa Clara Valley, clogged with fast-growing businesses and freeway commuters, pinpoints the mountaintop towers of Loma Prieta as an ideal source of dependable profit.

With the intention of financing mostly noncommercial projects, commercial KFAT of Gilroy was

purchased several years ago by two veterans of the listener-supported, community-radio scene—Lorenzo Milam and Jeremy Lansman. The two are known for KRAB in Seattle and the defunct KTAO of Los Gatos. According to a former disc jockey at KFAT, an initial \$100,000 investment has been turned into a three million dollar bonanza.

### Missing Records

A few days after the firing of the disc jockeys, 1,860 records—rare collectors' items—were discovered missing from the station. Perhaps to be spared from certain airplay oblivion, the vintage LPs were siphoned from the now aridly mainstream ambience of the post-coup KFAT and into a waiting pickup truck, which was spotted by some California Highway Patrol officers. Upon hearing of the theft from Gilroy police, the officers reported their observation. The police arrested the four programmers and the District Attorney charged them with grand theft, a felony. The four entered not guilty pleas at their November 25th arraignment and are awaiting a preliminary hearing date.

The missing records have just been restored to the station,

found after a hot tip led police to a storage locker in Aptos. Laura Ellen, former program director and still with the station, said that KFAT is pressuring the DA to drop the charges now that the records have been returned.

Programmer Sullivan (Cathy Roddy offmike) is following the advice of her lawyer and not talking about the record-theft episode. She does have words, though, for the hiring of Droce and the firing of the six Fatties (two office workers, Rebecca Fanker and Theresa Cortez, also lost their jobs on November 6th). According to Sullivan, Laura Ellen was replaced by Droce after sales manager Bob McLain convinced general manager Lori Nelson and absentee landlord Lansman (currently working in Colorado on a television project) that flabby programming was the true culprit for KFAT's longtime financial woes. McLain charged that the station's audience wasn't growing, pointed to a poor showing in the ratings, and told Nelson and Lansman that “tightening” the format would produce results. Lansman opted for Droce, says Sullivan, because he met him once.

Faulting the programming was dismissed by Sullivan as “hogshit.” She maintained that the airround continually attracts new fans—listeners in the East Bay have been known to erect high-tech antennae to improve reception—and that poor management is the culprit for the station's money problems. She dismissed the ratings as an accurate appraisal, saying that the station was plagued with technical problems and was off the air for much of the rating period. She sarcastically quoted Droce's approach as one of “correcting a poor-growth picture by tightening the program content,” which she felt to mean greater predictability in airing major artists and popular material, as dictated by advertising revenue and the Arbitron ratings.

Droce himself vows that the station will stay “progressive”—defined as a format “featuring music that's not necessarily popular and that you won't hear anywhere else,” including folk, blues, and country. If anything, says Droce, the station format will take on a more “progressive” stance by expanding its repertoire of artists and album cuts. Says Droce, “Every radio station sound changes whether you admit it or not.” He is seeking to

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## New Attack on Measure J

Business as usual for developers? That's what may happen if the growth management plan proposed last week to replace Measure J is adopted by voters in the June 1980 election.

Santa Cruz County is forecast to grow at more than twice the rate of the rest of California, according to State Department of Finance figures. Measure J, passed in June 1978, foresees that growth and claims that it would unduly tax the county's resources, particularly its aesthetic qualities.

But the new plan, which was prepared by three longtime property rights activists, says the county government should not “act to reduce the number of (building) permits that would otherwise be available to those seeking permits to build new housing units in any calendar year.”

From beginning to end, in fact, the ten page plan refutes almost every point outlined in the county's current growth control sys-

tem, which was established by voters through the passage of Measure J.

Proponents of the plan said they hope to begin circulating petitions this month to place their growth management plan before voters on the June 1980 ballot.

In strictest terms, Measure J outlines the threat of population increases to the county's natural environment and to its service industries. It then sets forth five general policies: preserve agricultural lands, encourage growth in urban areas, restrict county growth by annually establishing the county's “fair share” of state population increases, provide that 15 per cent of all new housing be affordable to average and below average income earners, and protect the county's timber, mineral and wildlife resources.

In addition, Measure J requires county government to design a growth management system for the county “to regulate the character, location, and timing of

future residential and other development in the county.

Oddly, the strong challenge to Measure J comes precisely at a time when the county has nearly completed refining the ordinances required to make the county's current growth management system workable.

Next Tuesday at 4 pm, in fact, there will be a public hearing before the Board of Supervisors at 701 Ocean St. to discuss limiting the county's population growth for next year.

Proposed by attorney Jeff Bosshard, and real estate brokers Howard Payne and William Cothran, the new plan is often ambiguous and inconsistent.

According to the plan's policy “h” for instance, an individual property owner should receive preferential treatment from the county if he or she is applying for a permit to construct the house he or she will live in. The policy then reads: “provided that such priority be granted to said individual no more than

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With this Phoenix, and the next, we will publish weekly for the first time in our history.

But this will end after next issue when we will take a break until January 10.

As always, the following deadlines will be adhered to strictly:

Editorial:  
Letters:  
Display Ads:  
Lines/Services:

Saturday noon  
Saturday at 5  
Monday at 5  
Monday at 5



# KFAT

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include more adults, and particularly women, in the 25-year and older range.

Droce respects KFAT as "the most progressive FM station in the Bay Area." "There are less rules and restrictions on the jocks than any station I've ever been at," says Droce, "and as long as I'm around," it's going to stay that way." The programmers have "100 percent control over the choice of the music, and follow no playlist. The majority of what we do is the music. We're not a personality-oriented station." Droce explained the recent changes in air sound by saying "We have some new people, and that always sounds different. Plus we just in the last three days got our records back. The best 1800 records from our library were stolen. Somebody had gone through, A to Z, and picked out only the rare LPs and collectors' items."

The effects of the first five days of Droce's reign were felt immediately by the veteran programmers. "It was like a giant snowball," said Sullivan. "We just watched it plow right into

us. We tried to offer alternatives, such as drawing up our own programmed format that would demonstrate our love and knowledge of the music. Nelson (general manager Lori Nelson) said she tried to relay our proposal to Jeremy in Colorado but we never heard from him. Now it's just like a different station. There's security guards all over the place, watching for alcohol and drugs." Sullivan said that the four were fired after DJ Susan called a meeting to discuss the rumored firing of Terrell Lynn. According to Sullivan, Droce walked in on the impromptu meeting and fired them all on the spot.

Droce categorically denies having anything to do with the firing, saying that he wasn't even on the premises at the time. How did the four lose their jobs? Did they quit? Says Droce, "I cannot comment."

Who hired Droce? Lorenzo Milam, owner of over 40 percent of the station, has been trying to sell his share for some time. Rumors began to spread that Milam had completed a transaction with a group of San Jose businessmen who were now beginning to inject a greater concern for profits into station management. This was denied emphati-

cally by Laura Ellen, who said that Jeremy and Milam remain the two principal owners, each owning a little more than forty percent.

Said Laura Ellen, "for those of us still in the station, it's a very emotional issue. We're trying to stay away from it all and not lose our cool."

Meanwhile, Sullivan is seeking Labor Commission arbitration in a wage dispute involving \$500 in back pay. And the four fired Fatties are planning a legal defense fund benefit for December 13th at the Catalyst, starring Chuck Wagon and the Wheels. Sullivan solicits condolences and contributions which

can be sent to the "Where in the hell did you find that one" Coalition, P.O. Box 490, San Juan Bautista. Will disaffected Phatophiles continue to listen to the station. Station management may find that they have to do more than sell T-shirts to keep the fat one well-fed. ■

Karen Rhodes

## Measure J

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While the initiative states that "the County shall seek to minimize the extent to which local planning decisions shall be subservient to those of regional groups or commissions," the general premise of the document is that state-mandated land use plans are adequate to manage county growth. In other words, the county is to give up its local ordinances in favor of state and regional laws.

The real estate agents' plan accepts county growth as inevitable and suggests only that there is no reason to worry about the environment or the county's natural resources because, "The residents of the County are committed to being able to live with their environ-

ment" in "peaceful co-existence."

Generally, the real estate agents' initiative says that growth in the county is "inevitable," that it should be "encouraged" to take place in an "orderly and reasonable manner," and And despite an emergency housing shortage in the county, the initiative insists that existing laws will ensure that housing is made available for persons earning below average incomes.

To qualify the initiative for the ballot, proponents will be required to collect 7,000 valid signatures by early March.

Should the threesome succeed in capturing enough signatures to qualify the initiative for the ballot—which is likely, given the current confusion regarding

the true nature of Measure J—voters should make sure they read both propositions carefully.

Last month, after nearly one and a half years, county administrators put the final touches on the county's growth management system. In the form of several county ordinances, the system constitutes the first truly thorough accounting for the county growth into the 1990s.

The thousands of hours of work and the thousands of taxpayers' dollars which have been spent on the county's first comprehensive plan for the future will be thrown out the window should the Bosshard-Payne-Cothran initiative succeed. ■

Clifford A. Welch